

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Kinsey O'Shea, AICP, Town Planner KO

TITLE: RZN19-0001/ORD 1892-Request to rezone 5.550 acres in the R-5 Transitional Residential and GC General Commercial zoning districts to PR Planned Residential zoning district on North Main Street, Montgomery Street and Broce Drive (Tax Map Nos. 226-20 9-11; 226-A 284-290; 226-A 293; 226-3 1-4) for the development of a mixed use student-oriented multi-family and commercial development by John Neel of Gay and Neel, Inc. (applicant) for Landmark Properties, Inc. (contract purchaser).

DATE: May 17, 2019

At the April 16, 2019 Planning Commission Work Session, there was discussion regarding several aspects of the application, plan, and proffer statement. In general, the topics focused on were:

- Additional traffic and transportation analysis
- Concerns about building scale and massing, setbacks and buffering, and context in the neighborhood
- Design of Main Street bike/ped facilities

The applicant has submitted a revised application, plan, and proffer statement dated April 30, 2019, with several changes. The applicant has included a cover memo outlining the specific changes.

- Application text changes
 - Clarification to confirm NGBS Bronze Certification
 - Revision & clarification of setbacks
 - Location of electric car charging stations
 - TIA includes analysis of traffic impact of the 1222 Patrick Henry PRD
 - Illustrations showing Blacksburg Transit routes, walking distance to stops, as well as inclusion of new pedestrian signal pole and crosswalk at Progress Street & North Main Street
 - Illustrative images of other "Standard" development amenity areas
 - Discussion of parking impact on neighboring properties
 - Discussion of left turn lane warrants and proposed changes
 - Widened sidewalk along Main Street
 - Additional information regarding bike repair shop to propose that it will be publicly accessible
 - Additional signage proposed along Montgomery Street that was not previously proposed
- Master Plan & Architectural elevation changes
 - Revision & clarification of setbacks on plan
 - Revision to façade articulation & vertical diversity, as well as clarification of materials
 - Revised landscape plan
 - Illustration of bike parking spaces within the bike rooms & in the garage

- Addition of channelized island to prohibit left-turns out of the parking garage onto Main Street
 - Widened sidewalk along Main Street
 - Fire access off Broce Drive
- Proffer language changes
 - Confirmation of NGBS Bronze Certification
 - Inclusion of new pedestrian signal pole and crosswalk at Progress Street & North Main Street
 - Removal of cash proffer for BT impacts
 - Tree replacement proffer for neighbors whose trees may be impacted by construction

Traffic & Transportation

The application includes a revised TIA that incorporates traffic from the recently approved 1222 Patrick Henry Planned Residential Development. The revised master plan shows a curb island in the entrance to the parking garage to channelize outbound traffic to prohibit left-turns out of the parking garage. The revised application and plan does not propose any changes to the lane configuration on Main Street to accommodate any left turn lanes. The application does include a graphic that illustrates potential negative impacts of installing a full left-turn lane on Main Street.

The purpose of the traffic and transportation analysis is to provide the Planning Commission and Town Council an analysis of the impacts of proposed development, the improvements to mitigate negative impacts, and whether the improvements proposed are feasible or desirable.

The Town Engineering staff has reviewed the revised traffic information, and has provided a memo that is attached.

Building Mass, Scale, Buffering, Neighborhood Compatibility

Setbacks

In response to the discussion involving building massing, scale, buffering, and neighborhood compatibility, the applicant has provided some additional information regarding these characteristics. The plan shows that the "minimum building facade setback" from property lines is 10'. The callout on the master plan alludes to both "minimum 10' building façade setback" and "minimum 0' building setback (open space provided as shown)" but it is unclear what is being described from the way that the callout is graphically and textually represented. The plan should show more clearly, what the actual minimum building façade setback is along all property lines; and the application should state the minimum building façade setback from property lines.

The Planning Commission was particularly concerned with setbacks along the project boundary adjacent to the single-family and two-family homes on Broce Drive and Montgomery Street.

If the purpose of establishing a 0' setback is to allow the area within setbacks to be able to count toward open space requirements, then it may be a better route to request an exception to the specific Use & Design Standard for Open Space:

§4328(a)(5) Open space shall not include required yards, except for single-family detached.

A formal request for exception to this standard would allow a building setback to be established, while allowing some of the larger and contiguous green spaces on the site to count toward open space in this

urban-form development. It should be noted that not all green space is being counted toward open space, but there are two areas of approximately 10,000 square feet each along the northern portions of the site that are proposed as open space.

Architectural Elevations & Scale/Mass

The resubmitted architectural elevations show minor changes that add some score lines or panel lines along the Main Street elevations to provide additional texture and visual interest to help break up the mass of the building. Additionally, the pedestrian corridor over the parking garage entrance contains more glass than previously submitted. The roofline also has additional variations in height and material, as well as some additional detail to break up the expanse of roofline.

Planning Commission specifically asked to see the setback and interface between the proposed building and the existing neighboring home on Broce Drive. This information was not included in the revised application. The revised elevations more clearly illustrates variations in building setback depth, and shows representative landscaping.

Buffering and Landscaping

The revised master plan includes additional landscape detail including representative deciduous and evergreen species. The applicant will have to ensure that the planting plan as proposed will be able to be installed as shown even with the development and installation of public utilities and any easements, given that the rezoning master plan is binding. This information has not been provided yet. A mix of deciduous and evergreen trees is proposed along the property line adjacent to the rear yards of homes on Montgomery Street. However, two properties along Montgomery Street do not have any screening due to the proximity of the fire lane. Evergreen trees are proposed along the rear yards of homes on Broce Drive. There are some trees along the side-yard property line of the neighboring home on Broce Drive, but the plantings do not continue to the back corner of the yard. This area is adjacent to the requested fire access, and thus there may not be space for plantings. However, consideration should be given to the interaction of this home and yard to the proposed hardscape and building nearby. Additional plantings are also proposed adjacent to the Abby's restaurant rear yard and parking area.

Several changes proposed may be less desirable from a neighborhood compatibility perspective. In the revised application, dumpster pads or utility transformer pads that had been located adjacent to the parking garage are now shown adjacent to the rear/side yard of a home on Montgomery Street. Additionally, there had previously been a portion of the rear fire lane improved with grass-pave surface that is now shown as asphalt. Grass-pave surfaces for fire lane applications are acceptable, as they have been used in developments such as Blacksburg High School. In coordination with the fire code official, it may be possible to show the Broce Drive fire access as grass-pave beyond the apron and sidewalk as well.

Signage

Additional clarity has been provided regarding specific sizes and locations of residential signage, as well as retail signage. More specificity has been given on signage for each particular façade. As mentioned in the previous staff report, the amount and location of proposed signage may be inappropriate for certain locations in relation to the surrounding neighborhood context. The revised application also proposes additional signage along the Montgomery Street frontages of the building that were not previously proposed to have signage. There are also several inconsistencies in wording and illustrations, and additional clarity is needed to define the specific parameters of the signage for the development. Because the nature of the plan is binding, and the plan and text will be used for enforcement and review

of sign permits, the language in the application and visual representation of the signage must be enforceable with no ambiguity.

To assist Planning Commission in consideration of the revised application, the key points from the April 12, 2019 staff report are included below:

- **Loss of commercial land**
- **Residential density proposed**
- **Urban nature of product**
- **Building scale, mass, and height**
- **Architectural features such as materials, articulation, rooflines**
- **Signage**
- **Open space**
- **Perimeter buffering**
- **Canopy coverage**
- **Utility easements**
- **Sidewalk width**
- **Transportation including bike/ped and vehicles**

There were several key points that were not addressed by the applicant in the revised materials including utility easements, and the interface of the parking garage with Montgomery Street.

Planning Commission may also benefit from bringing the April 12, 2019 staff report to the May 21, 2019 work session.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Town traffic memo dated May 17, 2019
2. Revised application, proffer statement, plan dated April 30, 2019